

Mr. Austin passed away this weekend at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit.

The story of Richard Austin's life is a story of the American dream. It is certainly a story of many firsts and many accomplishments.

Born in 1913 in Alabama, Austin's coal miner father passed away when he was only 11 years old. His family moved to Detroit.

He had to give up a scholarship to Wayne State University in order to support his family.

But he continued to take night classes at the Detroit Institute of Technology while working full time selling and repairing shoes.

In 1941, Austin became the first African-American certified public accountant in Michigan. He made a point of hiring other African-American accountants in his business.

In 1969, he was the first African-American to run for the office of mayor of Detroit.

Although he lost that race for mayor, the next year, he ran successfully to be Michigan's first African-American secretary of state, and Michigan's first African-American statewide elected official.

As secretary of state from 1970 to 1994, Richard Austin fought to make Michigan the first state in the Union to enact a mandatory seat belt law.

He also pushed a motorcycle helmet law and simplified the process for renewing driver licenses.

One of his greatest accomplishments was the passage of Michigan's 'motor-voter' law.

Once again, Michigan was the first state to put in place this system which allows people to register to vote at the same time and place they renewed their driver licenses.

The national motor voter law was not enacted until 18 years later.

Mr. Speaker, Richard Austin was more than a pioneer in Michigan politics and a leader in national highway safety and voter registration.

Above all, Mr. Speaker, what made Richard Austin such a special and rare individual was his strong sense of decency, integrity and grace.

Our thoughts and our prayers are with his wife of 61 years, Ida, and his daughter, Hazel.

A TRIBUTE TO DOUG JAMERSON

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a longtime friend of mine who passed away this weekend, Mr. Doug Jamerson. He was a former Florida Education Commissioner, Secretary of Labor, and State Representative. He was 53 when he died from cancer this weekend.

Mr. Jamerson was a lively and forceful man. He was a true educator and a great leader. In 1982, Mr. Jamerson and I were both elected to the Florida House of Representatives, where we served together for 10 years. He was a wonderful family man and he is survived by his wife Leatha and his son Cedric. Jamerson was a true Democrat who championed the cause of quality education for all children. He was a close friend of mine, a friendship that

we developed when he was elected to the Florida House of Representatives in 1982. For 11 years he represented District 55, which covered South Pinellas County and a small part of Manatee County.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. MEEK) who served with Mr. Jamerson along with myself.

Mrs. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding to me. The gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. BROWN), Doug Jamerson and myself served together in the Florida Legislature, and today he is gone. Doug Jamerson was a patriot. He was a man who loved Florida and who demonstrated it by serving as Labor Secretary and serving as Commissioner of Education. He showed his true love for Florida.

He was instrumental and a driving force in Florida's Blueprint 2000, Mr. Speaker, and that blueprint is what set Florida on the right track in his educational programs. Doug wanted to see accountability in Florida schools, and he fought very hard for that. He was an Air Force veteran. He served from 1967 to 1971.

Mr. Speaker, I do not think that anyone in the State of Florida who had respect for government and respect for love of the people did not know and did not love Doug Jamerson. He is a known man in the State of Florida. He was a loved man. He leaves a wife and a wonderful son to mourn him and the rest of us who served with him. We loved him very much. He will be remembered throughout our lives and throughout the lifetime of Florida's history as a politician and as a public servant who served both God and his people.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, in closing, when I think of Doug, I think of Paul and his great work. He has done great work for the people of Florida, and we will truly miss him.

Jamerson won a national humanitarian award for helping St. Petersburg recover from racial violence in 1996, when he walked the streets, helping cool emotions. It was a natural extension of his years as a school security guard in the early '70s when he spent hours counseling teens going through desegregation at a Pinellas high school.

His parochial school education taught Jamerson the integrity of discipline and one of his first acts as education commissioner was to advocate the socially leveling effect of wearing uniforms in public schools. The idea sank, but Jamerson's reputation rose as a public servant not given to predictable solutions. He was against both paddling and prayer in schools but said both had a place in a loving home. He was a Democrat who oversaw reduction by 50 percent of the state's education bureaucracy.

Jamerson will be remembered as a gifted man whose genial disposition made it hard for even staunch opponents of his causes to dislike him. He will be missed.

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THE BIPARTISAN SENIORS HEALTH CARE BILL OF RIGHTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHAYS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. ISRAEL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ISRAEL. Mr. Speaker, America's health care crisis affects millions of people, and I rise today on behalf of the 50,000 senior citizens on Long Island who have been kicked out of their Medicare HMOs.

Just 3 years ago, seniors had choices in their medical care. In September of 1999, 12 HMOs offered seniors health plans in my district on Long Island. Now only two remain.

In 1998 and 1999, 700,000 seniors across America were left without coverage when their HMOs decided not to renew their contracts.

This year, HCFA reports that 65 Medicare HMOs did not renew their contracts, leaving an additional 160,000 senior citizens in America with no Medicare HMO option. This is intolerable.

HMOs are choosing not to renew their 1-year contracts because of inadequate and unfair reimbursement rates. They are putting profits ahead of people. Health care should be a right, not a privilege. Ensuring Long Island seniors receive quality care is not a partisan issue; it is common sense. That is why I have been working with my Republican colleague from Long Island on a solution. Our plan, the Seniors' Health Care Bill of Rights, holds HMOs accountable and provides seniors the care they deserve. We will do this by providing carrots and sticks. Our Seniors' Health Care Bill of Rights includes three provisions: first, increase the reimbursement levels to keep HMOs operating in the senior market; second, our bill requires 3-year rather than 1-year contracts. Finally, our bill provides penalties for terminating senior coverage. If HMOs drop senior citizens in the middle of their contract year, they are going to be banned from the very lucrative Federal Employees Health Benefits Plan.

Mr. Speaker, I promised my constituents my very first piece of legislation would be this Seniors' Health Care Bill of Rights. This is only the beginning of the fight for senior health care. Now I ask my colleagues to join me in this fight.

Our senior citizens are the people who built our neighborhoods and schools, paid their taxes, raised their families, and fought our wars. Now it is time to restore the health care choice, access, and quality that they deserve.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that my colleagues will cosponsor the bipartisan Seniors' Health Care Bill of Rights.